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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 7426
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 9507
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 2247
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 3325
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RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002679

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

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NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
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ROME FOR MFO

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Iran/President Obama
- [1](#)2. Mideast

Key stories in the media:

All media reported that last night thousands (over 30,000, according to major media outlets) of settlers and right-wing sympathizers rallied near PM Benjamin Netanyahu's official Jerusalem residence to

protest the 10-month moratorium on settlement construction. Israel Radio reported that Likud Knesset Member Danny Danon waved a banner with the White House's telephone number, urging Israelis to call President Obama and tell him to remove his hands from the Land of Israel.

In what some called a compensation for the settlement freeze and HaQaretz termed a precedent-setting decision, the media reported that PM Netanyahu will seek cabinet approval on Sunday for a new map of national priority zones that will grant 110,000 settlers -- most of whom live outside the major settlement blocs -- the economic benefits conferred on residents of these zones. This move, which comes two weeks after Netanyahu announced a 10-month freeze on settlement construction, represents a sharp change from the previous government's policy: under Ehud Olmert, only communities in the Negev and Galilee were entitled to national priority status. The media reported that yesterday the Knesset approved the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem Referendum Bill -- 68 to 22. Key Labor Party ministers, including party chairman and Defense Minister Ehud Barak opposed the bill as unnecessary, but eventually voted for it.

All media prominently reported that the Weizmann Institute's Professor Ada Yonath will be awarded the Nobel Chemistry Prize in Stockholm today. In the same breath, the media mentioned that President Obama will receive the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. Major TV channels will broadcast the ceremony live. Maariv reported that previous prizewinners Professor Elie Wiesel, Nelson Mandela, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., provided Obama with the inspiration for the speech he will deliver in Norway.

HaQaretz reported that yesterday, senior members of the Israeli defense establishment told the diplomatic-security cabinet that the Palestinian Authority conducts diplomatic activity in the international community the purpose of which is to impose on Israel a diplomatic agreement leading to the establishment of a Palestinian state. During the debate, PM Netanyahu allegedly attacked the PA, warning there will be no real solution to the Palestinian issue without negotiations with Israel. The Jerusalem Post quoted Netanyahu as saying at the meeting that the PA is unwilling to compromise. Israel Hayom quoted the PM as saying at the meeting: It would appear that the Palestinians have adopted a strategy of delaying the negotiations in order to dodge the demands of the international community that require concessions on their part as well. Israel Hayom reported that PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas met yesterday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Abbas was quoted as saying in the course of that meeting that the deadlock stemmed from Israel's stubbornness.

Leading media quoted senior Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar as saying yesterday that the Shalit deal also depends on Hamas' good will. The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday President Shimon Peres told the incoming Turkish envoy that Hamas is ready for the next war.

Israel Radio quoted Syrian FM Farouk Shara as saying yesterday that the Gilad Shalit deal might include Syrian prisoners. Shara ruled out French mediation -- as wished by Netanyahu -- in negotiations with Israel. Shara was quoted as saying that President Obama prevented an Israeli attack on Iran several times.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan as saying in an interview published this morning with Egyptian journalist Fahmi Huwaidi, that if Israel were to violate Turkish airspace in order to conduct reconnaissance operations on Iran, Ankara's reaction would resemble an earthquake."

HaQaretz reported that the homes of some senior IDF brigade commanders are being protected by security forces to guard against harassment by right-wing activists.

HaQaretz reported that the U.N. Relief and Works Agency's (UNRWA) Commissioner-General, Karen Koning AbuZayd, spent Human Rights Day in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. She was quoted as saying in an interview with the newspaper that now is the time to bravely cope with the issue of Palestinian refugees.

Media reported that yesterday in Jerusalem border policemen arrested

a young Palestinians in possession of six pipe bombs and a knife.

Various media cited IDF data that fire from Gaza into Israel has lessened by 90% since Operation Cast Lead.

Leading media reported that the Prime Minister's Bureau announced yesterday that PM Netanyahu has canceled his planned trip to the U.N. climate change conference in Copenhagen next week and asked President Shimon Peres to lead the Israeli delegation in his place.

The bureau has issued conflicting statements about whether Netanyahu would attend the December 7-18 climate talks, but yesterday his aides attributed the cancellation to the trip's high cost.

Leading media reported that the trial of suspected Jewish terrorist Yaakov (Jack) Teitel began in the Jerusalem District Court yesterday.

Leading media reported that Israel and the Vatican will negotiate the status of real estate here that the Church has a claim to, as part of the plenary meeting of a joint economic commission starting today. Relinquishing sovereignty over sites would mean they would legally belong to Vatican City and any Israeli request to work on infrastructure would have to be approved by the Vatican. Media reported that Israel refuses to turn over sovereignty of the Last Supper room on Mount Zion.

The media reported on the opening of a QShimon Peres ChannelQ on YouTube.

HaQaretz cited a QgroundbreakingQ report prepared by the Palestinian organization SAWA, which fights violence against women, according to which Palestinian women are being forced into prostitution in both Ramallah and Jerusalem -- including in Jewish neighborhoods of the city. The report, released yesterday, says the victims come from various parts of the West Bank -- mostly urban areas -- as well as Gaza and Israel. It also notes that some eastern European women who were originally trafficked to Israel to work as prostitutes are occasionally sent to the West Bank.

All media reported that starting today, AppleQs iPhones are being marketed in Israel through all cellular phone providers. The media noted the high cost of the appliances in the country.

1. Iran/President Obama:

Block Quotes:

QObamaQs Peace Mission

Senior commentator Ari Shavit wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (12/10): QToday a grotesque ceremony will be held in Oslo. An American president who has not yet managed to make peace anywhere in the world will be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. He will be awarded the prize even though he is personally responsible for scores of targeted killings and much slaughter of civilians in aerial bombardments. He will be awarded the prize even though he has just decided to escalate one of the two ineffectual wars he is conducting. He will be awarded the prize only because he is a Democrat, a liberal, and a black man who defeated the Republicans and cast George W. Bush out of the White House.... International public opinion is still focused on global warming, not global nuclearization, as the most urgent issue on the agenda. The political libido of the West has homed in on Copenhagen, not Natanz.

This is Obama's mission. There is no other president who is capable of leading the international community in the face of this new threat.... If the Nobel laureate does not want to be remembered as the leader in whose term of office the nuclear genie escaped from the bottle, he must gain his composure immediately. He must use the little time remaining to lead a resolute campaign against the extremist forces acquiring nuclear capability. It is possible that such a campaign will fail. It is possible that it will cause serious complications. However, what lies in the balance now is no less than the world order. If Obama does not rise above himself and fulfill his mission, the event at which he will star this evening

won't be remembered only as a grotesque occasion. It will be remembered as a tragic one, too.

12. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

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1I. QTyng His Own Hands

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (12/10): QThe QReferendum Law that the Knesset voted to advance Wednesday would restrict the government's freedom of action in negotiations with the Palestinians, Syria, and even Lebanon by making it harder to cede East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, or even Shaba Farms, whether unilaterally or by agreement.... The bill would also eliminate the Qconstitutional lacunaQ that currently enables unilateral withdrawals from sovereign Israeli territory.... Thus Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who once again called yesterday for renewed talks with the Palestinians, is binding himself with constitutional chains. In Netanyahu's view, it is important that diplomatic agreements be supported by a majority of the public and not just the coalition's majority in the Knesset. But he is also signaling the Syrians, the Palestinians, and the international community that he will have trouble passing any significant concessions -- and trying to strengthen his hand in the negotiations. In addition, he is thereby pressing his negotiating partners to close a deal quickly, before the bill becomes law.

II. QA Necessary Step

Veteran journalist and television anchor Dan Margalit wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (12/10): QDemocratic countries tend to submit central issues to the public for decision in a referendum, ranging from questions of whether to join the European Union to the erection of minarets in mosques. There is no reason why the fate of JerusalemQs unity or IsraelQs hold on the Golan Heights should not be decided by the people in its entirety. The problem is that the lawmakers, in their alacrity, are liable to refrain from refining some of the rough patches in the bill. Those patches are, among others, as follows: It is imperative to contemplate with gravity the argument that use of referenda ought to be passed into legislation by means of a basic law, thus neutralizing immediate political interests from the public debate. The support of 80 Knesset members for a withdrawal is excessive to obviate the need for a referendum. A majority of 70 or 75 MKs is adequate. No referendum will be held when the issue at stake is a proportionate land swap. A referendum will be held only if 250,000 signatures of citizens who are eligible to vote in demand of a referendum are submitted. If those signatures are not collected, then a regular majority in the Knesset will be sufficient to authorize the territorial concession. The opponents of the bill said yesterday that they were afraid that it would cause Syria to despair of IsraelQs sincerity to negotiate. That is possible, but is by no means a necessity. After all, the manacles that the government has just placed on its hands by supporting this bill could be construed by people of goodwill in Damascus as proof that a government that signs a draft agreement believes that it will receive the support of the nation and not merely the support of 120 happenstance MKs.

III. QPeace Rejectionists

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (12/10): QAbu MazenQs Palestinian Authority canQt believe that this is happening to it: it is beginning to be perceived around the world as a peace rejectionist. It was sure a year ago that its luck was beginning to change and that a fairytale American president was going to make all its wishes come true. Within a year, everything has been turned around and instead of it casting Netanyahu as a rejectionist, people around the world are coming to realize more and more that it is the rejectionist. Two steps that were taken by Netanyahu succeeded in changing the

appearance of things: his willingness to accept a Palestinian state without a return of refugees and without Jerusalem - a step that if the Palestinians were serious about they would long ago have seized the opportunity; and the temporary construction freeze in the settlements, which placed Abu Mazen before another problem. Israel has taken steps, why are you refusing to negotiate with it, he is asked around the world. The burden of proof has been placed on him and he has yet to take any initiative vis-à-vis Israel. On the contrary, his Palestinian Authority has continued to incite against Israel.... Furthermore, in the past number of weeks the Palestinian leadership was given a stinging slap to the face in response to the idea it began to circulate about a unilateral state. The United States made it clear to them in the chilliest and most unyielding terms that there was no chance that it would support any such foolish initiative.... [The Palestinians], who wanted to isolate the United States and Israel by means of their unilateral initiative, ended up isolating themselves, casting themselves as peace rejectionists, as rejectionists of any genuine relations with Israel, as people who want to force the world to bend to their will. The Obama administration has increasing reservations about them; the Palestinians have overwhelmingly lost the administration. The unilateral initiative cost Abu Mazen and his men dearly, and they haven't got a clue now as to how they will respond to Netanyahu, who is standing and waiting to engage in dialogue with them.

IV. QWaiting for a Prince

Dr. Muhammad Watad, a senior law lecturer at the Safed Academic College, wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (12/10): QI have never doubted that a diplomatic agreement that would include full withdrawal from the Golan, a guarantee of Israel's security along the Syrian border, and plans regarding the natural water reservoirs in Israel's north, are likely to bring about safe and serious peace between Israel and Syria.... Indeed, according to media reports, Israel is bracing for a withdrawal from the village of Ghajar [which strides the Lebanese border] and Syria is renouncing preconditions concerning an [Israeli] withdrawal from the Golan.... In addition to France's role in the process, Arab leadership with an interest in upholding the peace process between Syria and Israel (possibly between Syria and the West through peace with Israel) is needed. This country is called Saudi Arabia, which is extremely interested in weakening Iran and Hizbullah [and] developing the Middle East.... A chivalrous, princely, gentlemanly move resembling Muhammad Anwar Sadat's visit to Israel is required.... An appearance by [President Shimon] Peres in front of the Syrian Parliament ... could of course bring the proposed negotiations to hitherto unknown heights.

IV. QEurope Has Forsaken Israel

Columnist and conservative international Jewish leader Isi Leibler wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (12/10): Q[As a participant in the Europe Israel Dialogue which took place recently in Jerusalem under the auspices of Lord Weidenfeld], I had disagreed with those who were arguing that we should seek support from the Europeans and rely less on the U.S. I said that notwithstanding the problems Israel faces with the Obama administration, our dependency on support from a superpower rested with the U.S. and that the Europeans had proven to be untrustworthy allies and repeatedly betrayed us. I also noted that in contrast to the American people who overwhelmingly support Israel, opinion polls taken in Europe confirm that the prevailing consensus perceives Israel as a rogue state posing a greater threat to world peace and stability than even Iran or North Korea. I also related to the craven European appeasement of the Arabs and their willingness to sacrifice Israel on the altar of expediency. My views were not well received by the predominantly liberal gathering, many of whom shared the illusion that if only Israel were to employ better PR, the enlightened Western traditions which we purportedly share with Europe would somehow enable us to overcome all differences.... One would expect Europeans to be concentrating their energies on devising strategies to retain their heritage and way of life, rather than appeasing the extremist Islamic groups which are undermining their Judeo-Christian civilization. Were they to move in this direction, there is every probability that the European penchant to demonize and try to delegitimize Israel might also be directed

toward more constructive objectives.

CUNNINGHAM